

INTRODUCTION.

At 10:30 o'clock on the evening of November 4, 1936, the socialist Prime Minister of Spain, Francisco Largo Caballero, announced the entry into his Government of four representatives of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo. "If more than once in the past, learned optimists had imputed to Spain the introduction of original elements into the political history of the world, at any rate she now set an incontrovertible precedent in having Anarchist Ministers."¹

It is an ironic fact that two of these anarchist ministers had spent a great deal of energy during the preceding years of the Spanish Republic attacking the other two for "collaborating" in politics.

One cannot understand the social and political history of modern Spain without paying considerable attention to the existence there of a strong working-class movement based on the ideas and tactics of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism. Nor in turn can one appreciate the development of this powerful and uniquely Spanish movement unless one grasps that much of its internal history has been played against a background of intense struggles centering around what was customarily described as "collaborationism".

1. A. Ramos Oliveira, Politics, Economics and Men of Modern Spain: 1808-1946 (London: Victor Gollancz, 1946), p. 596.

As everyone knows anarchists are not supposed to vote in elections or participate in parliamentary politics. That is a large part, although assuredly not the only part, of what it means to be an anarchist or an anarcho-syndicalist. But in 1936 the members of the largest and most important anarcho-syndicalist organization in the world, the National Confederation of Labor of Spain, or CNT, did both. If there is any meaning at all in words the CNT certainly did "collaborate" with the State. It is a nice question whether the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists ought to have done so but that should be the only point on which there can be dispute.

When we turn to the history of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain before 1936, however, we find that the question of the collaboration of the CNT in politics is a much more perplexing affair. It is perplexing for two reasons. First, because actions which some figures within the movement regarded as evidence of "collaborationism", which in anarchist language after all is an accusation of betrayal of principles, were viewed as quite legitimate and in some instances even praiseworthy policy by other members of the organization. Perhaps the fight was about conspiring with political parties against a dictator. Perhaps it concerned a common front operation with socialist trade unions, or allowing state mediation in labor disputes. It might even have been a clash about voting in elections. No matter which of these cases it was, charges of "treason" were sure

to explode.

Secondly, the issue of collaborationism was often merely a guise for another and more relevant debate on who was to control the CNT. This argument was usually expressed by a conflict between those whose emphasis was on the exertion of leadership through a network of small activist groups of like-minded persons, and those who put the center of gravity of the movement in the rearing of large trade union organizations, inspired to be sure by libertarian ideas. The difference in stress obviously corresponds to that difference in attitude which would mark off a convinced anarchist from a thorough-going syndicalist. It is the peculiar characteristic of the working-class movement of Spain that both these emphases were able to co-exist and, still more to the point, to intermingle and reinforce each other.

The justification for giving so much space in an introduction to a study of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism to the theme of collaborationism is simply this: one cannot read the history of the CNT and the movements in Spain from which it derived without being struck by the continual recurrence of this controversy about collaborationism. The fact that there was constant dispute about just what was and what was not cooperation with the enemy and that allegations of such deviationism were at times only facades for a battle over the most effective way to organize the movement does not

invalidate the point. "Collaborationism!" became the call to battle in many of the most significant struggles within the movement.

For this reason the collaboration issue can do equal service as a convenient hook on which to hang a brief sketch of some of the most important developments in the Spanish anarchist movement preceding the period with which this particular study is concerned: the years between the fall of Primo de Rivera through the first nine months of the Spanish Civil War. The earlier periods of Spanish anarchism have been treated in great detail in two valuable books: El Proletariado Militante by Anselmo Lorenzo and Historia de las Agitaciones Campesinas Andaluzas by Juan Díaz del Moral.¹ Both of these works discuss the activities of the International in Spain and the second contains a particularly admirable analysis of the rural anarchism of southern Spain. Mr. Gerald Brenan, in his book The Spanish Labyrinth² gives an excellent summary of the findings of these two pioneer studies.

Our account of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism will be focused on the years from 1930 to 1937. The study will not pretend to deal with the important agrarian problem in Spain

1. Anselmo Lorenzo, El Proletariado Militante, Barcelona, Antonio López. Vol. I, 1901; vol. II, 1923. Both volumes were republished after the Civil War in a single volume by Ediciones Vértice, Mexico City, n.d.

Juan Díaz del Moral, Historia de las Agitaciones Campesinas--Córdoba: Antecedentes Para Una Reforma Agraria, Madrid, Revista de Derecho Privado, 1929.

2. Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth, Cambridge, England, University Press, 1950; 1st ed., 1943.